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Subject: Love, the Common Law of the Universe.

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OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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LOVE,

THE COMMON LAW OF THE UNIVERSE.

"Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."—1 TIM. i., 5.

I have already spoken from this passage, defining what "the end of the commandment" means—namely, the results at which it aims; the fruits which it seeks to produce; the reason which it has for being, for exercising authority, and for its activity in the world.

It aims to secure the great, the universal spirit of benevolence, charity, love—by whichever term your philosophy styles it. But that it may not be supposed that charity, as here employed, is a mere mild sentiment, a mere well-wishing, kind, but weak, or at least feeble, the apostle gives his conception of Christian charity. It is a feeling that arises, not from any casual impulse of nature. No experience can rise to the height that justifies you in calling it charity or love, which springs merely from interest, or momentary generosity. It is that charity or that state of love which can spring, and does spring, only from a pure heart—or, in other words, a heart which has been divinely developed; which has been opened up into a state of symmetry and purity. That is a heart in which the moral and spiritual elements predominate over all casual impulses, and over all the lower nature of man. That is, out of the very highest moral and spiritual elements of man's being must this love spring which it is the nature of the law to produce. Nor ought we to think that this love, or good-will, which springs from men's noblest faculties, always works by the conferring of happiness, or that it seeks only present good. It seeks men's enjoyment by men's perfection. Therefore it is always an element that goes with the spirit of justice, equity, righteousness. Love out of a pure heart—out of the noblest instincts of nature, love that goes with a sound conscience—that is, with that whole mood of our moral being which discriminates between right and wrong, good and bad, high

and low in character—this is the love which always carries with it moral purity, and which carries with it, also, discriminating equity.

But then, it might still be thought that it was a sentiment which was exerted upon men for the sake of their lower life, for their present convenience; and therefore it is added, “By faith unfeigned.”

Now, “Faith is the evidence of things not seen.” Faith is the soul’s realization of those truths which are invisible. In other words, the action of that part of our mind is supersensuous. It does not work by the senses. It is higher than the scientific side of the mind, therefore, if by *science* you mean the art of knowledge that comes through the senses.

So, then, we conclude that benevolence, or the love which Christianity develops and makes the supreme end of its existence, is not a monochord; that it is a composite thing; that it carries with it the great sterling elements of truth, of righteousness, of justice; that it carries with it, not the present existence alone, but the life that is to come—the great realm of faith. It is the largest and supremest action of the mind which is conceivable.

Certain inferences were made during our former consideration of this passage which we shall not recapitulate. Certain questions were argued which it is not necessary now to argue again. There is further matter to be derived from the words of the Apostle. And I remark:

1. The commandment given to men may be assumed to be, as it is taught in the word of God to be, a commandment which represents God’s life and disposition. Not only is it a transcript of the divine will, but it is also a transcript, to a certain extent, of the divine life. That there are many things that man is commanded to do, either by words addressed directly to him, or by the organized laws of nature, which do not belong to the divine Being, is not to be denied; but of the fact that the great ends of human existence are the same as those ends which God himself pursues, we are not left in doubt. And when that, on which all the law and the prophets hang, when the law of the New Testament—the new commandment—is declared to be love, and love in that large way in which it is expounded by the apostle, it is fair to say that this is the universal law—a law not for man alone, relative to his lower condition, but for all beings in the universe, in their various conditions, from the highest to the lowest. It is because man is a member of the universe, and because God is training the whole universe to final unity, and because all his intelligent creatures are to come into unity with each other by coming into likeness and unity with him, that this great law of love is instituted. And this law is the law of

heaven as really as it is the law of earth; and of God as really as of any of his children. It is a law which includes all beings alike—the highest and the lowest; the least developed and the most nearly perfected.

Always, then, and everywhere, now, and hereafter, we are under a law which is turning us towards this one great element that the apostle declares to be the end and object of the world's existence—the production in us of this superlative and overruling feeling of true benevolence: not an indifference to goodness; not an indifference to truth; not an indifference to right and wrong. It is a benevolence which includes in it all these things; which makes them a part of itself; which wraps them up, and strengthens them, and gives them vigor.

2. The genius of creation and the genius of the universe may therefore be inferred, properly, to be benevolence. This does not exclude the use of stern or of forceful elements, by any means; but it does determine the purpose for which they are used; and it does determine the average direction which it may be supposed is taken by an economy in which all things are used under the supervision and inspiration of a central and divine benevolence. Which way time is traveling, which way the universe is traveling, and under what power of inspiration, is a matter of profound importance. Nature has the power of teaching much. It has taught but little. It is susceptible of teaching far more than men have ever yet found out by it. Men have found in nature, comparatively speaking, but little in respect to God; and that little has been, if I may so say, on the side of the natural or physical attributes of God. We have found out from nature how God treats matter; we have found out from nature how he treats the lower forms of animated existence; we have found out from nature how he treats the lower forms of humanity: but hitherto nature has been studied by men who were undeveloped themselves, and only parts of what it is capable of teaching has been found out. The higher reaches of knowledge nature has not disclosed as it has the power of disclosing them. Even the apostle, reasoning in Romans, declares that men might have found out God's "Eternal power and God-head" "by the things that are made"; but the apostle does not say that we can learn God's benevolence from nature. I do not believe that the terms and arguments of divine benevolence can be sustained by that argument. Nature is full of apparent contradictions. Force, in the history of the world, has been stronger than right. Cruelty has had more scope than kindness among men. There is that mystery of organization by which, from the lower to the higher, each thing is more or

less made to depend upon the destruction of something beneath it. We see on every hand the working of that law by which being feeds on being, clear up to man. And there it is only reversed when the Gospel comes in, teaching us rather to suffer for another than to make another suffer for our good. At that point is introduced the law of benevolence. But looking through nature comprehensively, in its lower ranges, it would be difficult to discern the evidence of a law of benevolence administered by a divine providence. In the material world there is much that is beautiful, and there is much that is fit, and there is much that can be made to serve benevolent uses; but the question whether the world itself, in its construction, indicates a benevolent Artificer, will be settled very much according to the circumstances and education of the person that reasons. If he is himself evenly balanced in constitution; if he has been brought up charmingly; if he has been very happy; if those around about him have been very happy; and if he has looked upon every thing from the churchly point of view, and seen every thing under the most favorable circumstances, he will be likely to think that nature says that God is a God of love. Nature evidently makes him wise and powerful; but when you look at the outlying race; when you look, not at the few that are fortunately circumstanced, not at the few that are housed and husbanded in the family, but at the masses of mankind; when you look at the vast volume of animal life, and attempt to find in their history evidence of the divine benevolence, you fail. To me it is impossible to see in the lower history of the universe proof that God is benevolent. That part of nature does not determine it.

But then, we find this: that the lowest part of creation, inorganic elements, and the lowest forms of organic material existence, are governed by absolute force. Rising higher, we find, in the lowest forms of human existence, that fear and intense terror begin to be introduced as a motive-force. Rising still higher, we find that as the lower forms of social life come into the sphere of voluntariness, motives grow milder. That is, men are susceptible to higher influences, and they have new points of susceptibility developed in them, as they rise in the scale of being. And as new ranges of faculties come in, you will find coming in with them higher principles of government, that tend to control men by the higher and better elements, and not by the lower ones; until, when you come to the higher forms of human life by being educated and developed, then you will find that the governing force is implied, rather than used. That is the undertone, the sub-base. It may be that the melody runs far above it in the direction of piety and moral life.

In other words, you will find that there is an ascending scale, and that the divine government which is indicated in nature is this: when things are low they are governed by forces which are appropriate to them; and from the lowest point all the way up, in every stage of existence, the governing motives are exactly adapted to the condition of the things governed, and all that is low is governed by force, and force that has in it coercion, yea, bruising cruelty, simply because it is the only thing that is adapted to the lower stage of development; because it is the only influence that can at that point be brought to bear upon existing things.

Taking in the whole of nature, then, there is an analogy which points toward a central benevolence, in this: that while at the lowest state of existence we see nothing but fate, nothing but force, there is amelioration from that point, in an ascending scale. It goes higher and higher, from force to lenity, and from lenity to mercy and love. And the analogy points still farther. It points to a realm beyond this life, where all government is benevolence, and where, having emerged from lower and disciplinary conditions, the race and universal existence will be governed supremely, not any longer by the law of force (for their state shall have been ameliorated); not any longer by the motives of fear and terror (for they shall have escaped from the bondage of these things); not any longer by considerations of interest (for they shall have risen higher than these); but by the principle of love. At last there are hints and indications of nature that the race is governed by disciplinary and recuperative forces.

But, in order to this conclusion, the Christian idea of pain and suffering must supplant the old Roman, the Tuscan, that is, the heathen, idea. Our notions of justice, to an extent that is hardly dreamed of by ourselves, have been vitiated by the infection of heathenism. There existed nations that loved the infliction of pain, as the old Romans did. And the Spanish bull-fights to-day are a coarse exhibition of that which pervaded ancient Roman jurisprudence and afterwards the Romish Church, and which we did not shred off at the Reformation. For many things then stuck to us which we might well have got rid of. This most repulsive idea of pain and suffering was derived from the Tuscans, who are said to have had, as shown in their art and literature, the most horrible conception of fate and of the future existence of all nations that ever lived on the face of the globe. And this conception of the infliction of basilar, fundamental pain and cruelty, as the right of the gods, has been handed down from age to age; and men have framed into their theology the idea that, for reasons of his own glory, God foreordained, from all eternity, por-

tions of the human race to be vessels of wrath, to be cursed and made miserable forever and forever. And we find that infernal, heathen conception of God coming on down to us through the various modifications and channels of theology. So that yet, in the minds of many men, this pain and this suffering are a part of the divine sovereignty and the divine right, indicating in God a love of pain and suffering as such.

Now, you cannot, in calling a being by another name, make him enjoy suffering without making him malignant; and any being that loves suffering for its own sake, any being on whose heart the sight of suffering produces a pleasurable response, is infernal. And there has been many and many a man who said his prayers to the devil thinking that he sat on the throne of Jehovah.

What is the Christian idea of pain and suffering? That it is a means to an end; and that the end is so blessed and so glorious in the fruition of joy as to justify the intermediate stage of suffering and pain. Thus justice is not ignored. Christianity recognizes a government of justice, and a government of pains and penalties, now and hereafter. But they are not pains and penalties for the sake of indulging any being in an unnatural and hideous ecstasy. Every throb of the great heart of Christianity is a blow to the infernal conception that God sits and enjoys the sufferings of the damned. It is enough to make men renounce their faith even to think of such a conception as this, as taught with authority, and as kept alive in some of the most excellent Christian sects of this day. It is a hideous, outrageous slander upon the grandeur of the love and the purity of the administration, and the beneficence of the wisdom, of the Ruler of the universe.

"But," it is asked, "is there not Scripture for it?" There is Scripture for anything that a man wants Scripture for. Yes, there is Scripture for it, just as there are knives in the ore of the mountain. You can get the ore, and you can make assassins' knives of it, or you can make plowshares of it. Scripture is a great forest, and you can go into it and cut timber and make it up into a great variety of utensils. You can make a flail out of this text; or you can make a plow-handle out of it; or you can build it into a cradle; or you can make out of it a warrior's spear-handle. Scripture is the most usable and adaptable thing in the world. It is with that as it is with nature. God has spread good and bad through the world. There are poisons here, and fruits there, and grains yonder; precipices lift themselves up on one side, and meadows and gardens stretch themselves out on the other; dangers and benefits, sorrows and joys, lie before men; and they can take the one or the other.

And the necessity of choosing is a part of their discipline. It is a part of the education of their intelligence. And it is their interest to take the right things.

The spirit of Christianity, as I have already intimated, is that of remedial suffering, which is consonant with the spirit of true benevolence.

"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

This is the charter of administration. It is the marrow of history. It is revealed by the spirit of Christianity that there are in the divine love all these operative forces. God, although he is full of beneficence, governs matter as matter must be governed. And as the existences which he governs rise in the scale, he changes the form of government from that of brute force to that of moral force. Even in the lower forms of human existence, physical power is of necessity employed, and government is painful; but as men rise higher under this education, there come in social motives and interests. And as in this school of discipline men rise still higher, they come into an academy where the government is more gentle, where there is less pain and more pleasure; and when they have come to this stage in the development of their moral sense, they have reached such a degree of spiritual susceptibility and refinement that God can deal with them as with sons, and they become partakers of the divine nature, and are no more strangers and foreigners, but are friends of God, and enter into his confidence, and come under his immediate inspiration, and live by the power of his Spirit which is in them.

Now, to me, the comfort of all this is in this thought that the genius of the universe, that that which has its hand on the helm, is not fate, is not cruelty, and is not indifference; that all the vast work that is going on is a work which is under the inspiration of this central spirit of benevolence. It is a benevolence that is determined to have purity, because that is the most beneficent thing. It is a benevolence that is determined to use all the instruments that are necessary to secure purity now and hereafter. Therefore it is love "out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." It is a love which takes in the present and the future, the now and the hereafter. It is a love that takes in the whole being of man. This it is that presides.

Time is a school, and God is the universal Schoolmaster, and men are learners, and are graded from step to step as they are to take the education that belongs to the successive stages of their being.

Such a providence as this is a joy. It inspires one with some hope for the world. If I thought that this world was a huge bag, and that nations, like cats, were swung round by some giant hand, they, meantime, fiercely scratching and fighting with infernal noise, what would I preach for? I would say to men, with the profoundest sorrow, "Get all the pleasure you can, give yourselves up to hilarity, eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow you die."

But such is not the world, and such are not the squabbles of life and time. There are the fitful spasms of force; there are the gigantic processions of woe and cruelty; there are groanings and travailings in pain until now; but there is a divine purpose under them all, which is working out results that issue from the very soul and heart of love. There is a good time coming. It will take it a great while to come; the road is long and the work is large; but it *is* coming; and even if I do not see it for a thousand ages yet, it is a joy and a comfort for me to know that it is coming. Some will see it here. The time will come when the world will cease to grope; when no man shall be obliged to say to his neighbor, "Know ye the Lord." The time will come when men shall beat their swords into pruning-hooks. The time will come when all the earth shall rest, and there shall be one more note joined to that universal choir that chants the praise of God, and of supreme and victorious Love.

3. Any system of theology, any style of preaching, which leaves upon the mind any other impression than that of divine benevolence as the regent disposition of God, and the animating spirit of providence, is unscriptural, false and pernicious. It cannot be doubted that systems of theology have left other impressions, and that preaching does leave, and that continuously, other impressions on men's minds.

I distinctly remember that as a child my predominant thought of God was one of fear and dread, because I supposed that the side of God which was turned toward me was vengeance. I was taught that I was sinful long before I knew anything but that I was so. I supposed that I was a sinner because I did not feel sinful. I was taught that the not feeling that which unquestionably was the underlying element of my being, was one of the tokens of sin. And I strove to feel; because through the gate of feeling I hoped to pass that wall on the other side of which the sun shone. I was on the north side, where all was snow; and they told me that if I could get on the other side, I should find that there the sun had shone so long that the vio-

lets were already blooming. I made the effort; but the snow was too deep for me. And until after I had reached my majority, my thought of God was one of dread and fear, because the side of the divine mind that was turned toward me was the side of "justice." My thought of God was that he was the *Just Judge*; that whenever men repented of their sin he would become the forgiving Friend and the universal Father, but that until men did repent, and just so long as they stood unrepentant, God was toward them a consuming fire. And that I consider to be a heresy that strikes the whole Gospel of Christ flat in the face. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" to die for it. God did not love the world because Christ coaxed him to. Out of love, out of infinite depths of desire and kindness, he gave forth from himself this expression of his nature. Oh! if I had only known that God loved me, and felt toward me as the mother feels toward the child; if some one had said to me, "Even as your mother takes you up in her arms to expostulate with you, to expose to you your fault that she may lead you out of it, letting no others know it till it is cured and passed away; as she helps your infirmity, just so God does. It is the divine nature to be medicinal to infinite weakness and want. God does not wait till you are worth loving (for you will not be, this side of eternity), but he takes you up just as you are that he may guide and mold you into loveliness. And now, while you are a sinner, while your heart is far from God and sympathy and love; while yet there is the whirl of passions in you, God does sympathize with you and love you; and you are beloved. Look up, and see that all is bright and winning and inviting." Oh! if these things had been told me when I first needed to know them, I might have walked in peace when I was eight years old—for I was subject to profound religious feelings at that early age. But they were hidden from my eyes then; and till I was twenty-five years old I had no thought that it was the nature of God to be sorry for sinners. The impression left on my mind was, that God was first pure and true and just; and that then, if men conformed to certain conditions, he would be loving. Whereas, I preach that God is loving all the time, that he was loving from the beginning, and that he will be loving to the end. I preach that love is the Alpha and Omega of the divine nature. And when I speak of God's love, I mean no puerile thing; no maudlin sentiment: I mean a love that is armed with force, and fear, and pain, and all things that are necessary to work the universe up from its low, early conditions, through all the changing phases of animalism, and through all the planes of humanity, and bring it at last into perfect unity and accord with the divine

nature and the divine government. This is a love that does not scruple to give pain; but it is pain for medicine. It is a love that does not scruple to smite and to punish—long and terribly to punish; but it is punishment which is inflicted as the bitterest and most loathsome cup is put to the lip of the babe by the mother, because she loves the child, and believes that in that cup is the hope of its life. God subjects individuals and nations to pains and sufferings that they may be brought out of their low estate, and not because he wants to see them sizzle and fry. Never does God punish because there is malignity in the divine mind—never! *never!*

We are, therefore, not only bound in our preaching to preach right doctrine, but we are bound to preach it with the right emphasis. I think there has been more error in emphasis than in statement. There has been enough, in all conscience, in statement; but there are many who hold technically right views of theology, while they so emphasize one or the other side of the divine nature that the impression left upon the minds of those that hear and read is unfavorable. Take a familiar example.

A man tells you, some day, "You have hurt the feelings of all those people over yonder." "I?" you say. "Yes, you." "Why, bless your heart, what have I said or done? I did not want to hurt the feelings of any of them." No, you did not voluntarily hurt their feelings; but you carried your being in such a way that it rode over them, and crushed them here, and hit them there. You did not take any consideration for them; so that every one of them has felt bruised or wounded, one way or another, by you. "Well," you say, "I did not intend to." No, you did not intend to; but it was the way that you carried yourself that hurt their feelings.

Now, there are men who are afraid that if they give up God's justice, if they remit on that side, if they loose the bands, and do not keep the spear-point to men's consciences all the time, if they do not preach the law continually, men will fly off from the truth, and go to destruction. And so they emphasize justice to such a degree, in their preaching, as to produce fear, and not love—dread, and not trust. Whereas, God should be preached as the most glorious and the most attractive and the most winning Being in the universe. He should be so preached as to leave the impression on the minds of men that he sums up in his nature all things that are good, or he could not be the almighty Good—for *God* is but a contraction for *good*.

4. In church-life there must be a practical recognition and an emphatic honoring of this principle that love or benevolence is the nature of all law, organization, institution, custom, or observance. And

although the instruments by which we educate men are not to be lightly esteemed, or loosely set aside, or carelessly drawn away, or recklessly changed, yet, when it is necessary to give up either the spirit of true benevolence or dogmas, and forms, and ceremonies, by which we seek to produce that benevolence, we are to cling to the benevolence, and let these other things go. This principle was clearly enunciated by Christ, when he said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. And I say, The church was made for man, and not man for the church. Dogmas and doctrines were made for man, and not man for them. Theology was made to help men, and men were not made to be sacrificed to it. All ordinances and institutions and commandments are designed to subserve men's uses and interests; and it should be so held and taught in our churches. The end sought, which throws back its value on all instruments and processes, is the spirit of true beneficence, kindness, love, self-sacrifice, helpfulness. The maintenance of powerful benevolence is more vital to the Christian Church than dogmatic systems.

Suppose a church do all believe right things, and all of them feel wrong ones, what is the use? Suppose a church do all subscribe to one confession of faith, and all of them quarrel with each other, and are full of jealousies, and envyings, and debates, and strifes, what does it amount to, that they are theologically united? Suppose a church is united in polity, and they all have the same government, and the same method of worship, from A to Z, and all of them are devoid of charity, what does it signify? Paul tells us, that though a man speak with the tongue of men and of angels and have not charity, he is as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. The apostle teaches us that all generosity is unworthy of the name which is not prompted by the spirit of benevolence. He says:

"Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

Charity—the divine holiness-producing, happiness-making spirit of love—this is the end of the law. It is the reason for the church. It is the reason for doctrines. It is the reason for polity and for worship. And yet, men sacrifice the feeling for the sake of keeping the instruments by which the feeling is produced. Men will agitate and embroil a whole generation in disputing about doctrines of charity, engendering all manner of rancorous feelings. Princeton will not speak to New Haven, and New Haven will not speak to Andover; and all theological seminaries are thrown into paroxysms. And they fiercely assail each other, and attempt to drive each other into Orthodoxy. And the churches, one after another, take it up; and all candidates for the ministry are rigidly examined on doctrinal points;

and heresy-hunters, like a pack of hounds, are at their heels, to see that they are sound in truth and Orthodoxy.

But where is that benevolence which truth and Orthodoxy were meant to serve? Where is that benevolence for the sake of which truth and Orthodoxy were ordained? Where is that benevolence by which men are to be brought into true sympathetic relations one to another? It is sacrificed for the sake of theology. And to-day our churches are set apart one from another, and sects are arrayed one against another, because the cohesion of benevolence is wanting.

All denominations are insisting upon it that we must *obey*. But what is *obedience*? Are we to be obedient to the outside, or to the inside? Is it to the shuck or to the kernel that we are to be obedient? Which is greater obedience, that of obeying the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," "and thy neighbor," or that of yielding allegiance to a doctrine which prescribes some outward observance? Which is the greater obedience, that which is demanded by the divine law of love, or that which is demanded by a dogma as to whether you will go under the water or not, or as to whether you will keep Sunday or not? These dogmas are mere outside leaves. They do not touch the root of the thing.

The law of benevolence says, "Do you love?" There is the rub; and men are saying, "No, we do not love; but the reason why we do not love, and fellowship, and coöperate, is that we must obey." Obey how? By putting on black during one part of the service, and white during another? By standing with the back to the audience during one part of the reading, and with the face to the audience during another part? "This," they say, "is ordered, and we cannot countenance any deviation from it." And so people sacrifice benevolence to externals—to the external of externals. And so have such fribbles deluded men—and wise men. Is there any place where Satan has spun more webs, and caught more victims, than in the Church of Christ? The church has been the slaughter-house of Christianity.

The heart of Christendom has never been concentrated as it ought to be upon that which the apostle declares to be the end of the law. The whole economy of grace is but the means or instrument by which men are to seek to develop this larger nature. Never have the church come up to a conception of this large Christian charge; and I think they have never had a universal enthusiasm for it, which would not let it go out from their sympathy. We have had revivals in which there has been enthusiasm for the propagation of the faith. We have had awakenings in which the power of the church was brought to bear for the spread of its views and doctrines. The church has had its periods of revival for dogmatic settlements.

Again and again truths have been rounded out, as men have supposed, by councils. Successive ages have gone down in which churches have been stirred up with scholastic fervor. The church has had its celestial rage for organization, if I may so call it; and has arranged how it should exist, and in what shape, and with what members, and with what distribution of authority. And the whole world has stood in suspense while these things were going on "for the sake of charity"—which charity, meanwhile, was destroyed. The church has had its fervor and revivals over ordinances, and over the reformations of ordinances. It has dispossessed them of idolatry, and reared them into new forms. It has killed some, and given added life to others. It has had its fervors of philanthropism and humanity. And now it is more in that condition, perhaps, than it has been at any other period. Probably there was never a time when there was so much that was in accordance with the second member of the great law, as at the present day. There have been times when "Thou shalt love thy God" has been fulfilled and kept almost to the forgetting of "Thou shalt love thy neighbor." "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," in the form of humanitarianism and the relieving of the ills of the race, has been the inspiration of our day almost to the forgetting of "Thou shalt love thy God." But when, in any age, has the whole church been seized, as by a divine inspiration, with the thought and the impulse of unfeigned and cheerful love one to another? When has there been the feeling in the church, "Benevolence, after all, in its largest, purest, truest Christian type, is the most precious thing we have, and that must be guarded, whatever becomes of doctrine. We must keep this spirit whatever becomes of ordinances. We must preserve beneficence, whatever becomes of orthodoxy. We must not lose this heart-love or heart-summer?" When has the church ever had that feeling or inspiration? When has it swept through any nation, or from nation to nation? This highest type of Christian experience the church is yet without.

5. We are to expect, in each individual, benevolence of character, and real charity of life, as the true fulfilling of the law. In instituting a series of educating influences, we are to take into account what truths will be more likely to restrain evil and purge the soul to purity than others. It makes a great deal of difference, in instituting educational influences, whether a man believes one thing or another. Truth is better than error, in just this, that it has more power to produce the final state of beneficence in its complex form. There is such a thing as the work of the truth; and therefore we are not to say that if a man is sincere, that is enough. That would be

absurd on the ship. If a man takes his reckoning by his chronometer, and it is all wrong, will his sincerity bring him into New York, or cast him away on the beach? If a man says, "Not plowing is wiser than plowing; sow your seed upon the hard ground, and let it be—that is the best way," will his sincerity make it the best way? If a man says, "Chaff is just as good as wheat, and if the farmer only thought so, and sowed it in faith and sincerity he would get a good crop," would he? If a man says, "Thistles are as good as wheat: only sow them sincerely and you will find them to be so," will you? The more sincere a man is who sows cockles and thistles and burdocks, the worse it is for him. Sincerity does not change natural law. And so I say that in instituting an economy of education, in instituting means by which to propagate religion, it is very important that men should be true; and sincerity is no substitute for the truth.

I do not say that the ordinances of the church are of no importance; I say that they are important, and that they require great thought and wisdom; but they are never to be so much thought of as to dispossess that for which they were themselves created—the great central spirit of true beneficence.

More than that, if I find that a man's heart is supremely possessed of this divine spirit, I am no longer at liberty to ask him how he came by it. If it is there; if he loves God, and gives evidence of it; if he loves his fellowmen, and gives evidence of it, it does not make any difference, it must not make any difference to me, where he got it.

I think it better to have common schools by which to teach the population how to read; but if a man has never gone to the common school, and yet can read—is not reading the thing? I think that going to school is the best way of getting education; but then, suppose a man gets an education without going to school, is that not to be taken as sufficient? I think that if a man goes through a school course, a college course, a university course, he is better educated than if he does not; but here and there a man comes up, and acquires an education, and makes himself felt, without going through any such course; and are you to question whether he is educated or not because he acquired his education outside of institutions? Because institutions, on the whole, are best for the community, are you to deny that any man is educated who does not go through them?

Now, I hold that there are great fundamental doctrines of the divine government and the divine nature, that are blessed of God

for men's amelioration, for their good; but suppose I find a man who has all the effects which these doctrines are designed to work, wrought in him by other influences, without being technically connected with the doctrines, am I to say that I will not recognize him as a Christian? I say that the spirit of God in the heart of a man is all that we have a right to look for. It may be interesting to know by what process he arrived at the result; but we are to judge of him by his fruit. If a Universalist gives evidence of possessing the Spirit of God, his life is his voucher for his faith. And if he applies for admission into our church, he is to come in, not because he is a Universalist, but because he is God's; because he is Christ's.

"Yes," it is said, "but what are you going to do about the doctrine?" Nothing. "But suppose a man wants to come in as a Unitarian?" He could not come in as a Unitarian—not if I had my way. I would stand in the door, and would not let him in. But if he should say, "Sir, I am ten times as much a Christian as I am a Unitarian. 'Ah! as a Christian,' I would say, 'you can come in, but not as anything else.'" No man can come in as a Swedenborgian; but he can as a Christian, no matter if he has the Swedenborgianism beside. A man may be a Christian, and yet be a Unitarian; and a man may be an orthodox man and not be a Christian. It is as long as it is broad. Some men are a great deal worse than their creed, and do not live half way up to it; and some men are a great deal better than their creed, and live far beyond it. Why is that? Because God employs more instruments in bringing up men than your church and Catechism. God has a church in father and mother; God has instrumentalities for saving men, not in ordinances and doctrines alone, but in the examples of holy men. Thousands of men in adversity and peril are helped by the illustrious lives of others, as no dogmas or ceremonies could help them. And the moment we see that a man has imbibed the true spirit of benevolence, we are to receive him, though we may reject his outward belief. We are to accept a man, not because he is one thing or another, so far as creeds are concerned, but because his life and disposition are right. A man whose heart is filled with love for God and his fellow-men has a right to stand in sweet fellowship with us.

But how can a man be a Christian who does not believe in Christ?

There is the puzzler. He cannot. But then, a man may believe in Christ who does not believe in Christ's name, using that name simply in its superficial meaning. Do we mean by *Christ* simply the letters that spell out that name? Is not *Christ* merely a name for certain qualities—for love, for purity, for truth, for a holy faith in and obedience to the Saviour and God? Is it not a name that sig-

nifies not simply beliefs, but succor of love, and self-denial of love? Is it not a name filled full of the sweetest and richest fruit of divine being? A man may believe in the thing which that name covers, who yet, from the force of prejudice and education, is unwilling to take the name itself. There is many a man who believes in Christ, only he will not call him by that name. He believes in God as he was manifested in Christ. He does not know much about the historical part of Christianity. He believes in that part in which the heart is concerned. He may not believe in theology; he may not accept all the dogmas in regard to days, and incarnation, and mediation, and passion, as they are framed into theology; but he has taken the spirit of Christ. And having taken that, he has taken Christ. If a man takes the spirit of Christ, it does not matter so much about the name. He takes Christ who takes his spirit.

Now, if you have not the spirit of Christ, go away. Do you say that you believe in the Trinity? Go away; your spirit is bad. Do you say that you believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—three Persons and one Godhead? Go away; you are filled with envyings and jealousies toward your neighbor. Do you say that you are sound on all the points of doctrine? Go away; you are, with all your theology, fierce and truculent and arrogant, and devoid of love toward God and man. You believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? Yes, you believe in the outside of them, but you do not believe in the inside of them. You do not believe in that which makes them. It is not the alphabet that makes God. It is not the spelling certain letters that makes God. It is the eternal purity, the eternal sweetness, the eternal remedialness in the divine power and wisdom and justice, employed for the purposes of love—it is these that make God.

A man comes in and says, "I do not know much about these doctrines. I know very little about Christ. I do not believe that he is divine. But I believe that his spirit is to be mine." He believes that the spirit of Christ is gentleness, is sweetness, is forgiveness, is self-denial, is laboring for others, is the feeling which the tenderest mother experiences toward her child. He does not see his way to believe in the ordinary view of his divinity; but in the higher view of it he does believe. He thinks he does not, but he does. He deceives himself. He is misled by a juggle of words. For that which is Christ is the inner life of Christ; and that is what he does believe in. As to the power of registering it, and putting it in its place in a system of theology, it would be better if he had it; but that is not vitally important. If any man has the spirit of Christ, he is his. He *does* believe in him.

And so, what of your Unitarianism? It becomes a mere word, a simple name. I do not myself regard that doctrine as being a part of Christianity, or as being that in which it is desirable to educate people. If I did I should not be preaching as I do here. If I thought that to be the best doctrine, I should take it. But if a man has the spirit of Christ, I will not reject him because he holds that doctrine.

Therefore, if a person comes to me (and it would be all the better if there were twenty of them), and gives me his individual experience in his daily life, and gives evidence that he is walking in the spirit of Christ and in the enjoyment of the divine presence, I take him, because he does believe in the interior of God. He may not believe in the systematic and exterior views of the divine Being as you and I have classified them; but he takes the spirit which they are designed to set forth. And I say that the love of God in the soul should rise higher than ordinances, than dogmatic systems, than sects, than the products of human reason. I believe that Christianity should begin on the inside, and work outside, and not that it should stand outside and wait till it can go inside.

And so, all that are called of God, and respond to the call, and give token of true obedience to the Father; all that by sweet sympathy and self-denial and service give evidence that they love their fellow-men; all that hope in the mercy of God, and not in their own vain righteousness; all that show by their lives that they are in the fellowship of the whole invisible church of Christ in heaven and upon earth—all such are known in heaven, are named there, and are longed for there, and will certainly be found there.

May God grant us all to enter largely into the apostle's generous and noble utterance:

"Now, the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We thank thee, O God, that thou dost not accept us according to our merit. It is not the purity of our being, nor its greatness, that commends us to thee. Thou dost not measure us upon thine own self. It is our feebleness which excites thy pity. It is our unripeness which leads thee to shine upon us. It is our sin which makes thee a Saviour in heart, a Saviour in providence, and a Saviour in grace. For thy nature is to be generous—to be gracious. Thou art not indifferent to righteousness. That is dear to thee; for us it is dear to thee. Thou art not willing that we should be taken away from pain and suffering, only to abide as cripples in deformity. It is thy desire that we should be shaped by love, by goodness, by compassion, and, if need be, by fear and by force. Thou art sovereign, and thou dost mold the great universe which thou hast under thee, according to its necessities, working mightily in all things, and working in all things according to their special need, that thou mayest direct universal progress and growth toward perfection, toward righteousness, toward all godlikeness.

We rejoice that thou art supreme; that none can hinder thee; that only thyself art counsel to thyself; that only thine own strength is equal to thy strength. Thou, O God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, dwellest in unalloyed companionship of blessedness; and in thee are the roots of universal being; and in thee is the destiny of all. From thee comes all history; and back to thee report all the events of history. Thou art the beginning and the end—the *Alpha* and the *Omega*. In thee we live, and move, and have our being. And what such being as thine must be, who of us, from our diminished sphere, can rise to understand? Glimpses we have, which we interpret by the things that are good in ourselves; but the height, and the depth, and the length, and the breadth, of infinity—above all, the scope and continuity of thy being—who of us can fathom it? It is toward thyself that we are living, and for thyself that we are longing. All other knowledge fails and seems worthless, if we may but stand in Zion and before God, and see thee as thou art, and feel the blessedness of thy life. This is the sum of all desire and aspiration.

And now, O Lord! as thou hast been patient in days gone by, still be patient with us. Command all thy angels of mercy, that they bear an expression of the fullness of thy love to us. Speak to all that is in nature, that it may serve us as from the God of love. And we pray that we may thus, by thine instruments and by thy servants, be lifted up from stage to stage, from sphere to sphere, from glory to glory, until we stand in Zion and before God.

Listen to the inaudible sigh to-day. To-day listen to the unspoken messages of the heart. Behold the things which we do not see ourselves. Behold even the things which we do not voluntarily show thee for fear or for shame. Naked and open must we be before Him with whom we have to do.

And grant unto every heart that is here, that succor, that assurance, that sympathy, that forgiving message of mercy, that inspiration of hope and of courage, which it needs. For some are sitting under the shadow. Thou art breaking over them great trouble. And yet, art not thou hid within the cloud that is round about them? We pray thee that they may not fear so much their outward trouble. Grant that they may have sensibility to the near approach of divine providence, and that they may have faith ministered to them to know that the hand that smites them is the hand that was pierced for them.

We pray that thou wilt be near to those that are in bereavements, and that are suffering acute anguish of heart. And when thy work hath had its way; when thou hast caused them to suffer enough, establish them through suffering in faith and in joy. We ask not so much that the thorns may be removed, as that thy grace may be sufficient for every sufferer.

Be with those that are full of trouble for others. Hast thou not known this burden, Lord Jesus? Hast thou not long enough carried the world in thy sympathy to understand and succor all those that by sympathy for others are burdened? And may they learn this lesson evermore. As thou didst carry the sorrows of men; as thou didst bear their sins; as their sicknesses were laid upon thee; as thou hast been the great Substitute and Nurse, bearing the world and all its creatures, even as the nurse bears the little child, so, O Lord! we beseech of thee that in our measure, and afar off, and in a diminished sphere, and with exceeding imperfection, we may in kind be like thee, and carry one another's burdens, and bear one another's infirmities, and carry one another's faults, and be patient with each other unto the end. May we long more for others than for ourselves; looking not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of another.

And we pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all those that have come up hither, this morning to speak of thy mercies and of thy past kindnesses to them. May they not forget to give thanks who are blessed every day. May we not have a sense of need more than of thy bounty. May we seek more to see what God hath done for us, than to see that which we yet lack.

And we pray that thou wilt bless all families that are accustomed to meet with us in this congregation. If any are withheld from the place where they would be, may that place where they are be a sanctuary. And may the Spirit of God's love minister to every one of them. And we pray that the heavenly light may not be withheld from, but may abide upon every Christian family.

And we pray that thou wilt this morning remember those that are sick, and those that wait with the sick, and those that are absent from among us because they are bearing messages to the unsought and to the untaught. And remember those that are sent afar off on errands of thy providence. Grant that everywhere those whose hearts look wistfully this way to-day, may be satisfied from the sanctuary of the Spirit of God. Bear messages of mercy and of peace and of blessing to them.

We pray that thou wilt be with all, to-day, that shall preach the Gospel. May they be strong in body, and inspired of heart, to do the will of God and their duty toward men. We pray, O Lord, that thou wilt unite thy people more with the Spirit of love, and that charity may pervade the Church of Christ upon earth. And let not malign power have any more its abiding place in thy temple and sanctuary. May the Spirit of the Lord come, and pure love be developed out of the Church, that the world may begin to see the dawn of its summer. Let thy kingdom come, we pray thee, in all intelligence, in all knowledge, in all justice, in wise laws, in pure and upright magistrates, in national peace, in national kindnesses of good neighborhood. Bring to an end, by the power of the truth, and by the uprising nature of the whole human family, all superstition, and all misrule, and all oppression, and all wars, and all cruelties, and all those great disasters that so long have ravaged the world. Let thy kingdom, in which dwelleth righteousness, come, and thy will be done upon earth as it is in heaven.

We ask it for Christ Jesus' sake. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt bless the word that has been spoken. May it be for edification. Forgive the error; forgive the misconception; forgive anything that is untoward and offensive to thy mind. Bring us into more perfect sympathy of love with thee. May we give evidence that we love God, in that we love the brethren. May we forget all differences. May we bear with each other's imperfections. And grant that there may at last come a day in which Love is God among men. May there come a day in which the hearts of thy people shall be filled with the spirit of charity. And, at last, wilt thou revive love in all the earth. And come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; for the whole earth doth wait for thee. And to thy name shall be the praise Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*]

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
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